

Episode 295 - Plutarch's Absurd Interpretation of Epicurean Absence of Pain

Post by "Rolf" of August 28, 2025 at 3:09 PM

Excellent reply Cassius.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Looking back over your questions I'll go back to the best example I know of. You only have some much time in life to experience what you're going to experience. It is helpful to visualize your total lifetime as a jar, which you must decide how to use. The jar by definitional choice can contain only (1) pleasure or (2) pain. No part of it is ever empty. The pains and pleasures it can contain are all possible mental and bodily pleasures.

This is particular I find very helpful. I'd say I'm quite a "tactile" person who prefers these more tangible and illustrative examples over abstract concepts.

To be sure I'm understanding correctly: The (conceptual) goal then is to have our jar as full of pleasures as possible, as often possible. "Absence of pain" (meaning pleasure, as the feelings are only two) is the limit of pleasure. I'm imagining someone laying down on a sun lounger, hands behind their head, saying "it doesn't get better than this". Absence of pain, as a conceptual term, isn't necessarily referring to a literal absence of hunger, thirst, and backaches, but is more expansive than that. Just as pleasure includes all kinds of things, so does pain: Boredom, worry, stress, fear, doubt, guilt. And this is why simply absence of thirst/hunger etc. isn't enough to definitively say someone has reached the limit of pleasure. Am I on the right track? Please point out anything you disagree with.

As for Chrysippus' hand: How can it be said that the hand had reached the limit of pleasure if a hand massage would've been even more intensely pleasurable than the healthy resting state?

[Quote from Rolf](#)

Could you specify in my previous questions where I am talking about the concepts and where I am talking about the actual experiences? This would be helpful in clarifying for me.

If you could take a look at this when you get a spare moment, it would be a big help! Thank you for all your support with this Cassius, I very much appreciate it. I likely would've dropped most philosophies I've explored by this point, but with Epicurean philosophy my gut is telling me this is just a matter of misunderstanding terminology.